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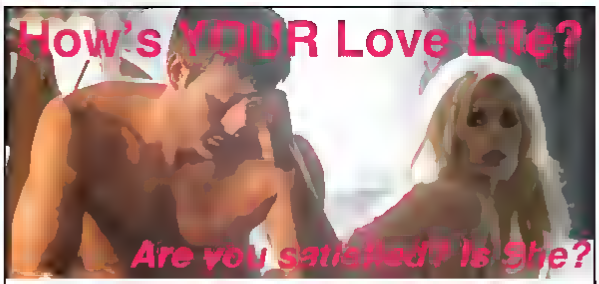

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ANREL GRADY

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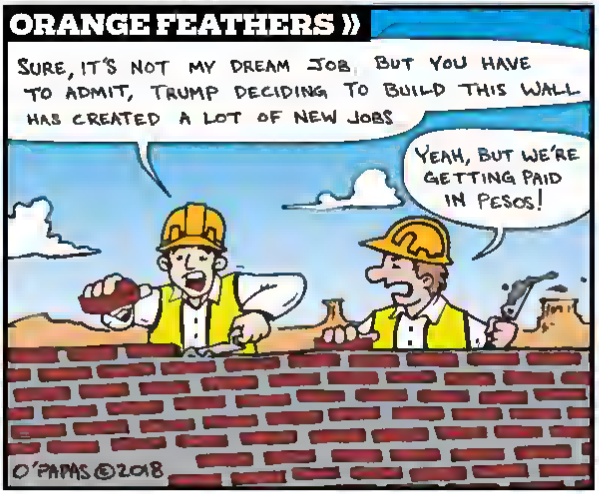
Photo by Bryan Sheehy
Design by Richie Beckman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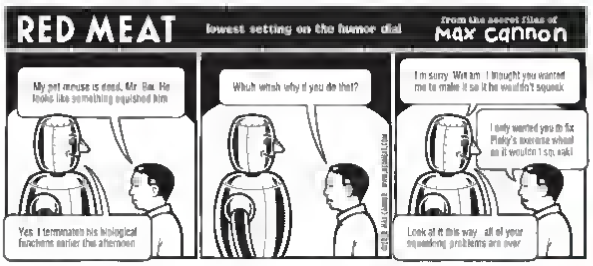
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STEVE ZYLIUS/UCI COMMUNICATIONS

UCI SPEAK FREELY

Speak, debate, let what was said sink in, debate some more and form an educated opinion. This is what is supposed to happen on college campuses. But these days, someone captures video of the rough-and-tumble on a cellphone, edits it just right enough to conform to the shooter's worldview, then promptly posts it on social media to shame the speaker.

How we have arrived at where we have arrived at, and what to do about it, is the point of the University of California's National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, which revealed its inaugural class of 10 fellows on Feb. 8. The fellows will spend a year researching timely, vital First Amendment issues, with a goal of developing tools, analyzing data and presenting lessons from history to be highlighted at a national conference later this year. Each will reside for a week at one of the 10 UC campuses to engage with students, faculty, administrators and community members.

The California legislature last summer passed Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 21, which urged state colleges and universities to adopt free speech statements consistent with the principles UC Irvine Chancellor Howard Gillman articulated in a 2016 campus policy statement. When UC President Janet Napolitano launched the center last October, she appointed as its advisory board co-chairmen Gillman, a leading constitutional scholar, and Erwin Chemerinsky, the founding dean of the UCI School of Law, the current dean of UC Berkeley's law school and a respected constitutional law scholar himself. Gillman and Chemerinsky co-authored *Free Speech On Campus*, hailed as a primer on the complex subject.

Other board members include former U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-California), former U.S. Secretary of Education and CEO of the Education Trust John King, Facebook strategic communications director Anne Kornblut, *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens, *Washington Post* columnist George Will and National Public Radio White House correspondent Tamara Keith.

With Gillman charged with overseeing the administration of the center, "UCI becomes a command post for the study of free speech," boasts a university press release that also notes that among its chancellor's first duties is searching for an executive director.

"Freedom of expression is the indispensable element in all our other rights in this country," says Chemerinsky in the release. "Today's students are rightly concerned about hate speech, bullying and polarization. We can and must educate them and ourselves about free speech and civil discourse. It is essential to democratic government and our future."

WILL DISNEYLAND BECOME THE HAPPIEST HOMELESS SHELTER ON EARTH?

The answer to that question, in your best Mickey Mouse voice, is "righty-oh"—if online petitioners get their way. A Care2 petition asks Anaheim's Magic Kingdom to provide shelter for the hundreds of homeless whose encampments have been targeted for destruction by the county.

"Those who have signed the Care2 petition are asking Disneyland to step up and help its community, since it clearly has the means to do so," states Rebecca Gerber, Care2's senior director of engagement, in an email. "Disney could make a real impact by providing shelter in one of its hotels or donating money for shelter."

Orange County has a shortage of beds for those who would be forced out of the makeshift camps, according to the ACLU, which is among the nonprofits that have so far successfully used the courts to keep the homeless in the riverbed.

As of Feb. 12, Gerber's petition had 16,262 signatures toward a goal of 17,000. Disneyland, which has not commented on the petition, did just reveal it is raising prices for single-day tickets and season passes.

"Homelessness is right on Disney's doorstep, and Disney has built its brand on magic," Gerber says. "What's more magical than manifesting help in the face of hardship?"

COLD AS ICE

Long before U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) got a tool to access license-plate-reader information, the police departments of Orange, Tustin, Anaheim and Fountain Valley were already supplying that data to the federal agency.

That's in a recent Electronic Frontier Foundation report on cop shops in at least 14 California cities sharing the plate info with ICE for years. No need anymore. ICE recently struck a deal with Livermore-based Vigilant Solutions to obtain the data directly.

SHIT PEOPLE SEND US

Here's a little inside baseball. Emails addressed to oceditorial@ocweekly.com reach everyone in the *OC Weekly* editorial department. Surprisingly, we have collectively caught the eyes of horny Ruskie ladies.

Dear oceditorial, my name is Tatiana, i'm from Russia but now i'm living in US :-)

I've found your profile on FaceBook and i like you soooo much. You are very cute and smart :-) Maybe we can talk to each other? If you are interested in my photos please email me at [REDACTED]

Kisses, Tatiana ;-)

Dear oceditorial, Finally I have got a change [sic] to write to you. My name is Anastasia, i'm from Russia and now i'm living in USA :-) I saw you first time on Facebook or Instagram, I don't remember, but today seeing you again made me write to you:) You look so sexy and at the same time very cute and smart, just like my type. Maybe we can talk? If you would like to know more about me, please, email me. My email is [REDACTED]

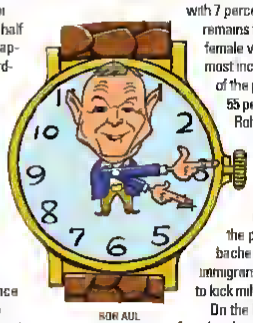
MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM

Poll Dance

» MATT COKER

Last week, we told you about Democrats in the 48th Congressional District race raising more money than 30-year incumbent Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Putin's Serta Perfect Sleeper). Now, a statewide poll shows strong disapproval of the job President Donald Trump is doing is affecting the same contest in Dems' favor.

Despite a Republican voter registration edge, more than half of likely voters in the 48th disapprove of the president, according to the poll conducted in mid-January by the highly respected UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS). You'll recall the same district favored Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election.



BOB AUL

The new poll found that just 38 percent of likely voters in the 48th approve of Rohrabacher's job performance compared to 50 percent who disapprove, including 38 percent who disapprove strongly. Among likely voters, 51 percent are not inclined to vote for Rohrabacher, 41 percent would back him and 8 percent are undecided. The opposition to him is spread among voters in every age group.

Broken down by political party, 90 percent of likely Democratic voters would not choose Rohrabacher. His support among Democrats is at an anemic 4 percent, with 6 percent undecided.

The incumbent is still supported by 73 percent of Republicans in his district, with 16 percent opposed and 11 percent undecided.

What should be troubling, especially in an open-primary election, in which the top two vote-getters of any party advance to the November ballot, is 61 percent of non-partisans would not vote for him, only 30 percent would and 9 percent are undecided.

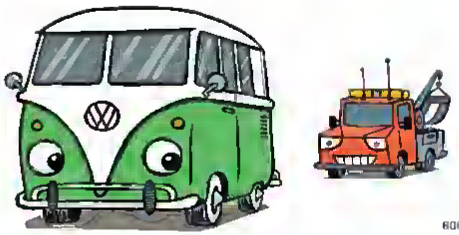
Among male voters, yes for Rohrabacher edges no 47 percent to 46 percent. However with 7 percent undecided, the potential remains for a negative swing. For female voters, who are no doubt the most incensed by what's coming out of the pussy-grabber White House, 55 percent would not vote for Rohrabacher, only 34 percent would and 11 percent are undecided. *Yikes!*

Democratic Congressional Committee spokesman Drew Godinich credited the poor poll showing to Rohrabacher stances that would "rip immigrant families apart and threaten to kick millions off their health care."

On the latter issue, the IGS poll found a plurality of voters in the 48th were not happy about Rohrabacher's stance on health care, with 48 percent saying his vote in favor of repealing and replacing Obamacare made them less likely to re-elect him and 43 percent saying it made them more likely to vote for him.

"Trailing in fundraising and in the polls," Godinich says, "it appears the chickens have come home to roost."

Got Dana Watch fodder? Email mcoker@ocweekly.com



BOB AUL

HeyYou!

» ANONYMOUS

Bye, Bye, Bus

You are the guy who keeps parking his VW bus in front of my house. I want to congratulate you for your taste in automobiles.

I've always wanted one of them myself. So I guess it kind of irritates the hell out of me that while I've never been able to have one of my own, the curb in front of my house has become a parking spot for yours. Every street sweeping day, you move your bus back and forth across the street, right on time, without fail. One of these days, I will wake up, and the bus won't be there anymore. Just saying.

HEY, YOU! Send anonymous thanks, confessions or accusations—changing or deleting the names of the guilty and innocent—to "Hey, You!" c/o *OC Weekly*, 18475 Bandilier Circle, Fountain Valley CA 92708, or email us at letters@ocweekly.com

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Three OC sex-industry workers share their personal experiences in all their gory, glorious detail

By Jeanette Deane

Editor's Note *For this year's annual sex issue, OC Weekly spoke to three sex workers in Orange County. Their stories are gritty and graphic, but they also reveal a sense of personal pride, dignity and even humor in a profession that, despite being known as the world's oldest, remains tainted with shame, scorn and, perhaps worse, ignorance. We share these stories to highlight the personal experiences of three workers as they navigate the challenges and perils of Orange County's underground sex industry.*

Ruby is a 28-year-old masseuse who holds a state certificate to give massages but also provides handjobs to clients. She is in a long-term committed relationship and is the mother of a 4-year-old son. Katy, 23, is currently a topless stripper but has previously worked at a full-nude club where she performed "full service" sex work. She has also worked as an escort. A full-time student at a Cal State university, she hopes to go to law school, but she also has two side businesses she hopes to concentrate on as soon as she leaves the sex industry. Tricia was born a male but identifies as a female. A 25-year-old call girl, her sex work began on the streets at age 15.

OC WEEKLY *What is the most expensive service someone has asked you to perform?*

RUBY For sex, the most is, like, $1,200, but I never do it 'cause most of the time, they're full of shit. Or, like, one time, some guy goes, "Here, let me eat you out, I have all this money right here," and I was like, "You're not going to give me that money, give me the money, and I'll definitely let you do it." He's like, "No, no, just…." I'm all like, "Just nothing, motherfucker. You think I'm stupid? Keep your money in your pocket 'cause it's probably your rent. Stop bullshitting me and hurry the fuck up 'cause your time is almost up."

KATY The weirdest thing I got asked to do was insult a guy with a micropenis. He came into the club, and he was all tweaked out, and he was like, "I want you, I want you," and I said, "I need at least $120 to touch you, otherwise I can't." He only had, like, $80. He's like, "I'll pay you more; I'll give you my necklace." He was so weird and desperate. And then he asked if he could pay me to see me get fucked by someone else with a bigger dick than him, but he wanted to see the picture of the dick first. He wanted to be shame-fucked, he said that turns him on.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRATT

Sex In The County

» FROM PAGE 9

Do you still enjoy and have sex when you aren't getting paid?

RUBY Fuck, yeah. I still find enjoyment in sex because I have only one partner. Yeah, there's sometimes bot guys that go in there, but I'm not turned on by them. Because they can be the cutest fuckin' guy, but when they're saying, "Oh, you're going to waste this dick," and I'm looking at them, thinking, "Motherfucker, your dick isn't even that big. I have a bigger one at home and you're insulting me by telling me this, so shut the fuck up because you're paying for my hands."

KATY Yeah, I enjoy sex more when I'm not getting paid because I feel like it's actually a deeper connection. When I get paid for sex or a lap dance or whatever, it was literally a business transaction. You're paying me to give you this service. I'll give it to you. I'll make sure you're happy, and then you come back for some more. Sometimes, they would get attached and fall in love, but I didn't enjoy that. Even if they'd pay me a lot or even if they were hot, I prefer having sex with someone I want to give my body to physically and emotionally.

TRICIA It depends who I'm with. I enjoy having sex, but if I don't have a relationship and it's, like, a one-night stand, I don't enjoy it nor will I have sex with you if I don't see money coming in.

What's the oldest guy you've been with?

RUBY He was 82, and I thought he was so cute 'cause he looked like that old dude from *The Simpsons*, and I'm like, "Aww, how cute, sit down"—like, trying to be nice to this motherfucker—and he sits next to me, and he fuckin' pushed me on the bed. This fucker was stronger than half my other clients, and he tried to stick his tongue in my mouth, and [gags] I almost threw up, and I yelled, "Get the fuck off me! The fuck is wrong with you?" I told him to back away and never do that shit again. He ended up being nice and tipping me $100.

KATY I think maybe he was in his 80s, but he was a really sweet guy. He had adopted children from Thailand, and he was sweet, and he always wanted handjobs. He would give me $100 for a lap dance and $100 for a handjob.

TRICIA I'd say 60, but some of them don't even look their age. I get a lot of men who say they're 50, but I'm sure most of them he, so I'd say about 60 years old.

What's the smallest dick you've ever seen?

RUBY My toe is bigger. Like, it was a nub. This was a grown-ass, 7-foot-tall-ass, big, huge guy, and he had a nub, and I can't jack that off. Like, even using the tips of my two fingers, it would slip out. There's a head. It looks like a tiny, little mushroom just sitting there, and I can't jack him off, so I have to, like, rub it like a clit. He came. He has regular-sized balls, just no dick. And I've seen guys with huge dicks and marble-sized balls.

KATY A nub. Probably the size of my thumb. This guy is, like, 200 pounds, really big, super-successful, owns, like, all these companies, and he's balling with a BMW, all suited up like a boss, and then he busts out his tiny dick. Strippers actually prefer small dicks, though, because you don't have to work with it a lot. Like, big dicks get in the way, and a lot of the times, they'll try to fuck you. To make them cum, you just have to rub it, or you put your fingers around the head and just twist your fingers like you're tuning a radio but really fast.

TRICIA The guy last night, he was, like, 3 inches, but I think it was because he was very thick, like fat. I'm not trying to be rude, but he was heavy, so I'm assuming that's why he had a small dick, but you'd be surprised. There's some fat people that have decent, big dicks. When I see a small dick, I just think to myself, "I just gotta do what I gotta do," but sometimes it's impossible. I still charge the same amount. I try to not get impatient and be like, "Can you hurry? I got shit to do." But I try to be fair, and a lot of clients come back to me.

JOSHUA K. JACKSON

Have you ever had a female client?

RUBY I had one boss bitch—she was, like, a CEO of a company, and she was very discreet because she didn't want anyone to know she was a lesbian because they would kick her out of the board. She had some nice, huge, perky-ass tits and a banging body. I was doing the massage, and I turned her over, and she grabs my hand, and she just starts fingering herself. So I was grabbing her tits, but she kept moaning and shit, and that's the thing: Women are too loud, way too vocal. I just told her to shut up, put a pillow over, told her to bite it, and then she released a big moan, and she was done. This stupid bitch only left me $20.

KATY Yeah, she was my favorite; I haven't seen her in a while. She's an engineer and has a lot of money. She was really respectful and nice, and she was kind of like a tomboy, and she had long hair and was in her early 50s. I asked her if she wanted a dance; she said, yes. So then I asked her if I could grab her and play with her tits, out of respect. Just 'cause I'm a sex worker doesn't mean I don't know that people have boundaries, so I still ask. She had natural, like, triple-D tits, and I was like, "Oh, my god, how are they so perky?" She's an old lady, but she was turning me on, so I started touching her and fingering her. I still remember thinking, "Damn, that was not bad. Like her pussy was pretty tight and bomb. I'll probably eat her out next time."

TRICIA Not only women, but a lot of couples. Men who will say their partner wants to join or just observe, and I'm open to it, but it's not necessarily my cup of tea.

How do you work while you are on your period?

RUBY I feel like we get way more perverts coming in because we are on our period because, for some reason, that bloated feeling, it attracts them like they can sense the pheromones. Every time I'm on my period, no matter what time of the month it is, I still get more clients. I always feel like crap during that time, and I think they aren't going to want me and I don't even want to take clients, but then I go in the room, and I turn on like a light switch, and I do my thing. I don't know what the hell it is, but they also get grosser when you're on your period. Like, once, one guy kept telling me, "I want to taste you," and I was like, "No, I'm on my period." He ended up sticking his finger in me and pulled it out quickly and stuck it in his mouth. I literally gagged and said, "You're disgusting." He's like, "No, fuck no. It still tastes good, and I don't care." He was so fuckin' gross.

KATY I usually wear pads because it's healthier than having the fibers of a tampon inside you or risk getting toxic shock syndrome, but when I go to work, I use tampons, and I cut half of the string and tuck the rest in. I usually wear the super-heavy ones depending on my flow and how long my shift is. I always make more money while I'm on my period. I guess 'cause I get hornier and really turned on, and they can see that I'm genuinely enjoy-

ing it, and they'll tip me more. I just feel so much more femmine and sexy while I'm menstruating. I just constantly have to be checking that I don't stain myself 'cause there's been situations where strippers are giving guys a lap dance, and then they get up and the guy has a bunch of blood on their pants.

The only period horror story I have is once I was onstage, and I was dancing, and I was so drunk I forgot that I didn't tuck in my tampon string. That was so embarrassing. I even had guys onstage, and I made a really good amount of money that night. After I got off, the bartender was like, "Hey, your string is sticking out." I was like, "Ugh, why didn't you tell me before?" Like, "You decide to tell me now?" I left the stage so disappointed, that came out, and be ate it all.

KATY I was at the strip club, and some guy walked in after partying at Angel Stadium. He came in minutes before closing time, so I told him I'd charge him more since he specifically requested me and I was ready to leave. I charged him $300, but after giving him a couple of dances, he was like, "Let me suck on your toes." I replied, "My feet are pretty stinky and sweaty; I've been dancing all night. Are you sure?" Often, when strippers are giving dances, your feet get tired, so you take your shoes off on the carpet, and the carpet is dirty—you don't know if there's cum, or if they wash or vacuum it. Anyways, I took my shoes off and put both my feet in his mouth, and the rest of the time, he was just sucking my feet. It was so gross, but

VILIMAN VILIMAN

but the girls in the back were all very supportive and told me it has happened to several of them.

TRICIA Clearly, I don't get a period. [*Laughs.*]

What is the most disturbing service someone has asked of you?

RUBY One guy, we were really busy, and he was just desperate to come in, so he told me, "Just watch me jack off in the bathroom really quick, and I'll give you 40 bucks." He's jacking off, and he says, "Come here, hold it in your hand." I say, "Give me an extra $20." He agrees. He then cums in my hands and says, "Feed it to me." I fed him all his cum, everything to me, it was like, "Fuck, yeah, I'm making $300 just to sit and get my feet licked."

TRICIA When they tell me to eat their ass, I don't fuckin' like that. But I don't mind if they eat me out. [*Laughs.*] I've had guys ask if they could pee all over me. Guys will want to spit on my face while I'm giving them a blowjob, like, "Hell, no, no."

What is the most hurtful thing someone has said or done to you?

RUBY Sometimes, guys treat us [sex workers] like we are trash, like they are disgusted by us, but they still want our service. People are hardly mean, but when

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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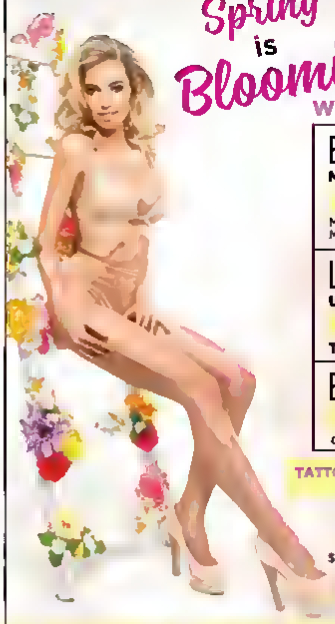

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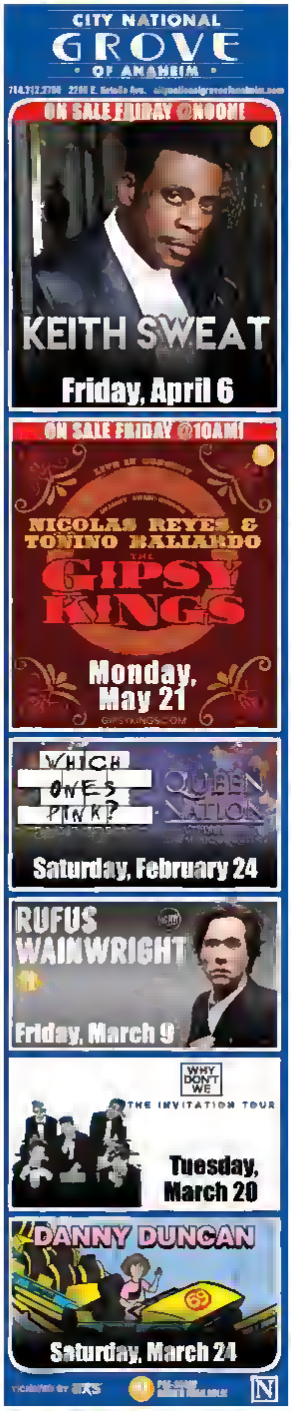

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Sex In The County

» FROM PAGE 11

they are, I make it a point to fight back because they want to treat me like I'm some fuckin' dumb bitch. All sex workers have rights. We are human beings, and I'm a citizen.

KATY: I once had a guy dressed as a FedEx guy come in, and he had me jack him off. He then asked to have sex, so I stepped out to grab a condom, and when I came back, I heard yells in the hall: "Santa Ana Police Department." And the FedEx guy was an undercover cop, [and he] started playing the victim, yelling out that I was entrapping him. He then told me, "You know I get to take my money back." He was horny; he was hard. He had let me jack him off for a long time before he called backup. He was taking enjoyment in scamming me, and I felt so used. Cops are the worst: They verbally harass you and dehumanize you during raids, but outside of work, they flirt with you and take pictures of you and demand acts without pay. But as soon as you say no, they criminalize you and make you feel inferior.

Another time, I had a guy who I met with at a hotel, and before having sex, he asked to turn on the lights, so he could check me. He told me, "Sorry, I'm just a really clean guy, and I don't want you to touch me and infect me. Don't touch yourself; just use one hand for my dick, and don't do anything with the other." He was a germaphobe, which is good, but at the same time, I felt insulted, like people don't understand that I could fuck 10 guys and still be cleaner than someone who has fucked three.

TRICIA: Very rarely will I have people insult me or say rude comments. Sometimes, when I go out to bars or clubs, but usually, it's girls because they're hating that I just look that good.

How often do you get tested?

RUBY: I get tested once a year because I only have one partner.

KATY: I get tested, like, once every four months, so quarterly.

TRICIA: Every six months. I recently got tested in January, and I came out clean—thank God.

Do you have your clients wear condoms every time?

RUBY: No, because I only do handjobs, and I only have one partner, so we don't use condoms.

KATY: I always wear a condom, except when I'm fucking someone and there's feeling involved. But I have the implant, so it's still a contraceptive.

TRICIA: Oh, girl, you want to see my stash? *[Pulls out a grocery bag full of different sizes, colors, flavors and brands.]* I always take care of myself.

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COURTESY OF CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

fri/02/16

[CONCERT]

STONED SOUL EVENING

5th Dimension

The 5th Dimension's cork-popping "champagne soul" comes to the Coach House, as the quintet transport us to a time when "sunshine pop" and "psychedelic soul" topped the charts and made each day seem really not that bad at all. Touring the nation with original lead singer Florence LaRue, they guide us back to the glory days of "Let the Sunshine In," "One Less Bell to Answer," "Wedding Bell Blues" and "Stoned Soul Picnic." So toss your troubles up, up and away, and join these legends for some rebooted Age of Aquarius enlightenment—now with more consciousness and fewer bellbottoms.

5th Dimension at the Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 496-8930, thecoachhouse.com. 8 p.m. $40. —SR DAVIES

[FILM]

Im-Pressive

Pressing On: The Letterpress Film

Although the majority of the free world relies on digital platforms for their daily news, the letterpress—a 500-year-old analog process for mass printing—revolutionized the way information would be disseminated among the people. In the 21st century, there are still communities of diehard letterpress collectors, hobbyists, historians and more who have kept the centuries-old print format alive, even as passionate pressers face their own eventual extinction. The history of the process as well as the issues keeping the format alive are the focus of the excellent documentary *Pressing On*. Check it out at tonight's Free Fridays screening at the Orange County Museum of Art.

Pressing On: The Letterpress Film at the Orange County Museum of Art, 850 San Clemente Dr., Newport Beach, (949) 759-1122; www.ocma.net. 7 p.m. Free. —AIMEE MURILLO

sat/02/17

[FOOD & DRINK]

DOG DAY AFTERNOON

Mimosas and Mutts

Panxa Cocina kicks off its new monthly "mimosas and mutts" brunch gathering with this celebration of the Year of the Dog. Executive chef/owner Arthur Gonzalez welcomes you, your fur babies and all your friends to relax on the sunny patio while you sip on some sparkling champs and your dogs enjoy bites from a custom canine menu, which will be offered to brunch-goers on the third Saturday of every month. There are southwestern staples such as rice and beans for the slobbery set, as well as a free juice flight to accompany bottles of champagne for thirsty dog moms and dads. Come out for a wagging good time!

Mimosas and Mutts at Panxa Cocina, 3937 E. Broadway, Long Beach, (562) 433-7999, panxacocina.com. 10 a.m. —CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

[EVENTS]

Rags Not Riches

Lumpenball

Closing out the annual Karneval season—the German twist on Mardi Gras—is Lumpenball, the festival at which raggedy attire is chic! Traditionally, rags and old clothing are worn in contrast with the high-end, luxurious garments already sported at Karneval, which celebrates the last big hurrah before Lent. At today's fête, bring out your best worst threads to revel at the end of Fasching and pay your respects to the Phoenix Club's Prinz Karneval with a procession of mourners. Expect tunes by DJ Kirsten, drink specials, hearty German food and more!

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Lumpenball at Phoenix Club, 1340 S. Sanderson Ave., Anaheim, (714) 563-4166, www.phoenixclub.com. 7 p.m. $5. —AIMEE MURILLO

sun/02/18

[FESTIVALS]

Red Envelopes Galore!

Tet Festival

The Vietnamese community's annual Tet Nguyên Dán has established a reputation as the largest such festival in the world. Each year, more than 60,000 guests turn up for the weekend-long celebration of the Lunar New Year, which heralds the coming of spring and the chance to start afresh. Over the course of the event, guests will have a chance to experience parades, contests and performances highlighting various local programs and aspects of Vietnamese culture. Enjoy delicacies at the food court and thrilling rides in the carnival area. People of all ages and ethnicities will surely find much to marvel at during this colorful celebration of life!

Tet Festival at OC Fair & Event Center, 88 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 388-6711, tetfestival.org. 11 a.m. $6; children younger than 2, free; parking, $8. —SCOTT FEINBLATT

[CONCERT]

Third Wave's a Charm!

Oi-Skall Mates

Unbeknownst to many, Japan's ska-music scene has been thriving since the 1980s While Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra are considered one of the older, more widely recognized Japanese ska groups, Oi-Skall Mates has established quite the presence since the late '90s, mixing a potent combination of punky ska tunes. Performing tonight at the House of Blues, Oi-Skall Mates are poised to draw in local rudies while perhaps encountering new fans. This is one night in which East and West fans will skank together as one.

Oi-Skall Mates with Viernes 13, Skapeche Mode and Stupid Flanders at the House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 Disney Way, Ste 337, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim. 7 p.m. $15. —AIMEE MURILLO

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mon/02/19

[FILM]

A Must Watch

Killer of Sheep

Charles Burnett made *Killer of Sheep* as his thesis project for a MFA at UCLA, filming fragments in the early '70s in his neighborhood in Watts with people he knew largely comprising the cast. In 2007, however, *Killer* was restored and put into wide release for the first time, decisively and publicly establishing its classic status. It's a stark, powerful film that moves at its own pace, depicting in high relief what Roger Ebert characterized as "the quiet nobility of lives lived with values but without opportunities." As part of the Frida's Black History Month—or as part of any cineaste's experience, really—it's mandatory viewing.

Killer of Sheep at the Frida Cinema, 305 E. Fourth St., Ste. 100, Santa Ana, (714) 285-9422, thefridacinema.org. 8 & 9:45 p.m., also Tues. $7-$10 —CHRIS ZIEGLER

tue/02/20

[TRIVIA]

Rockers Welcome

Rock Band Trivia Night

In honor of South Coast Repertory's upcoming production of *Cambodian Rock Band*—a play by Lauren Yee with music by Dengue Fever—Chapter One hosts a night of rock-music-themed trivia! A must for self-appointed music aficionados, bring your gaggle of nerds to see who knows the most about rock & roll. (And preferably, come prepared with your best parodic team name paying homage to a famous rock group.) Prizes go to the team that emerges victorious, while food and drinks are available for purchase. Do like the Cars song says, and let the good tunes roll!

Rock Band Trivia Night at Chapter One: the modern local, 227 N. Broadway, Santa Ana, (714) 352-2225, www.chapteronetml.com. 7 p.m. Free. —AIMEE MURILLO

wed/02/21

[MUSEUM EXHIBITS]

Remember Our Troops

'The Buffalo Soldier Experience'

Not to be confused with the Bob Marley song of the same name, the "Buffalo Soldier Experience" exhibit at Muzeo is a celebration of African-American men and women who served in the United States military. This heroic group probably wasn't in your history textbook, but its members were among the bravest, most unheralded folks in military history. Beginning with those who roamed the western frontier with the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments, this exhibit showcases the way their underrated and underappreciated service was intertwined with the growth of the country at large.

"The Buffalo Soldier Experience" at Muzeo, 241 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim, (714) 956-8936; www.muzeo.org. 10 a.m. Through March 11. $5-$8 —WYOMING REYNOLDS

COURTESY OF CIRQUE DE SOLEIL

[PERFORMING ARTS]

LIGHTS ON *LUZIA*

The vibrant sights, mythologies and traditions of Mexico are the influences behind Cirque du Soleil's latest show *LUZIA*—which takes its name from the Spanish word for light, *luz*—features a colorful tableau of characters coming to life in a surreal sequence in traditional and imagined spaces in Mexico. The light serves as a replenishing source for the show's spiritual and natural elements, illustrated best through Cirque's talented cadre of aerialists, trapeze artists, acrobats and performers. Featuring original songs inspired by traditional mariachi, Latin and folk music and eye-popping visuals, this brand-new traveling show will be in Orange County for a limited time.

LUZIA by Cirque du Soleil at OC Fair & Event Center, 88 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 708-1500, www.cirquedusoleil.com/luzia. 8 p.m. Through March 18. $50-$495. —AIMEE MURILLO

thu/02/22

ANDY HOLLINGWORTH ARCHIVE

[COMEDY]

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Eddie Izzard: Believe Me

Comic ambassador of free association, public advocate for language acquisition, stylish cross-dressing transgender man, long-distance marathon runner for charity and, lately, prospective British Labor Party candidate, the multilingual comedian/scholar Eddie Izzard also finds time to write and act when not performing his smart, public-discourse-driven standup around the world. Literate and surreal, he personifies every challenge to social norms in dresses, heels and mascara, yet he easily persuades audiences to join his sociable, humane imaginings via manic riffs on politics, Shakespeare, Greek myth, Oscar Wilde, Tolkien and poultry, as in his recent memoir, *Believe Me: A Memoir of Love, Death and Jazz Chickens*.

Eddie Izzard: Believe Me at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.scfta.org. 7:30 p.m. $39 —ANDREW TONKOVICH

[LECTURES]

The Award Went To . . .

'Timeless Melodies: The Best Song, Oscars 1934-1959 (And the Songs That Didn't Win)'

As Oscars season approaches, you can expect plenty of Academy Awards-centric coverage and hype. But today's lecture commemorates winners and nominees from the past—particularly of the Best Song category, honoring the rich tapestry of music that has been a part of the Great American Songbook for the greater part of the 20th century. Jon Bowers' favorite Larry Maurer, as he discusses some brilliant and memorable tunes from old Hollywood that became nominees, winners and, most of all, timeless—namely, "Over the Rainbow," "Three Coins in the Fountain" and "Thanks For the Memory." Get to know the composers behind these classic treasures, which singers brought them to life and more in this epic journey through beloved music history.

"Timeless Melodies: The Best Song, Oscars 1934-1959 (And the Songs That Didn't Win)" at Bowers Museum, 2002 N. Main St., Santa Ana, (714) 567-3600; www.bowers.org. 1:30 p.m. $9-$12. —AIMEE MURILLO

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EDWIN GOEI

It Takes Two To...

Cambalache does a great steak-and-potatoes dish, Argentine-style

BY EDWIN GOEI

Is there anything better than a properly done steak? The answer to that is Yes, when it's paired with perfectly crisp potatoes. I had such a meal at the new Cambalache in Fountain Valley. It was utterly transcendent—one of the best steak dinners I've had in years. First, there was the steak itself; it wasn't a rib-eye or a Porterhouse, which wouldn't take much to get right. No, this was a skirt steak, a finicky cut that can easily toughen to leather. And it wasn't sliced against the grain as it is when relegated to platters of fajitas. This was the whole steak and nothing but the steak. On my plate, it resembled an airfoil wing—thick on one end and tapering to a point.

By its nature, skirt steak doesn't melt in your mouth, so eating it did involve some chewing. But it was always pleasurable, never a chore, and my, oh, my, the dividends it yielded in flavor! The edges were caramelized and pockmarked with char as though it were a beefy crème brûlée. The rest was so extraordinarily savory I swore some sort of marinade was involved; I checked the menu—only sea salt and pepper seasoned this grilled slab of cow.

It did come with chimichurri, a whole saucer of chopped parsley and garlic submerged in oil that I hardly used on the meat. All I required was its soul mate—the golden-crusted potatoes that my waiter claimed was roasted but I think had to have been fried. How else could they be so uniformly crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside? The best thing I did was to smash them with my fork into the steak juices that accumulated on the plate, sopping them up like a sponge.

At this point, I should mention that Cambalache is actually an Argentinean restaurant. It's been open for about two months in a sleepy Fountain Valley strip mall that I often ignore while on my way to Huntington Beach. Entering it for the first time, I discovered that the exterior, which is low and squat, hid a cavernous space with high ceilings crisscrossed by wooden beams. There were paintings of elegant dancers in mid-embrace while lively tango music echoed throughout the room. Along one tall sidewall, Italian wine, tomatoes and pasta were on display.

As with other Argentinean restaurants such as Villa Roma in Laguna Hills (where executive chef Leo Razo used to cook), Cambalache also serves Italian dishes. Actually, that's an understatement, as nearly the entire menu is Italian. There's minestrone and pasta e fagioli as soups, a handful of paninis, two risottos, pizzas, a phalanx of pastas, and chicken and veal prepared in all the usual Italian ways, marsala and piccata among them. That night, I tried the shrimp and asparagus risotto. It was tinted yellow from saffron, which made it taste almost like paella. But sadly it wasn't as loose or as creamy as a proper risotto ought to be. And as I crunched my way through undercooked rice grains a few minutes shy of al dente, it verified what I kind of suspected going in. Take a pass on the Italian stuff and stick with the Argentinean. This, of course, brings me to the empanadas.

Cambalache offers three: beef, chicken and spinach. And that's all that's needed. Each meticulously braided half-moon was constructed of a thick crust that was sturdy but also flaky and tender. Its most amazing attribute was that this pastry dam managed to hold back a torrent of juices that wept from the filling. Each was so juicy I almost asked for a spoon, as with dumplings, when it comes to empanadas, the juicier the better. And there might not be any empanadas in OC juicier or better than these.

If you're going to dn Argentinean here, you might as well go all the way. Don't stop with the empanadas or the steak I mentioned earlier, get the parrillada mixta, a meat mosh pit that includes the skirt steak, flap meat, short rib, sweetbreads and two kinds of sausages: the blood sausage called morcilla and an Argentinean chorizo. The dish will arrive at your table atop a parrilla (a traditional, iron-grated grill) as though a parade float. That parrilla is equipped with a couple of smoldering charcoal briquettes, which not only keeps your meat warm as you eat, but also adds a slight smokiness.

The next time I go, I might bring a fellow meat-eater to conquer it. As with the tango, it takes two. Besides, while there's nothing better than good steak and crispy potatoes, there's something to be said about another soul with whom to share it—not to mention a bottle of red wine.

CAMBALACHE
8760 Warner Ave., Ste. 15, Fountain Valley, (714) 375-3305, cambalachegrill.com. Open Mon.-Thurs., 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Fri., 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sun., 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Entrees, $10-$38. Beer and wine.

WHAT THE ALE
» ROBERT FLORES

Phantastik!

PHANTOM ALES
1211 N. Las Brisas St., Anaheim, (714) 225-3206, phantomales.com

The fabled La Palma beer trail in Anaheim features nine breweries, and at its epicenter is Phantom Ales.

Located in a cozy cul-de-sac, it doesn't seem as if much is going on from the outside, but once you enter the tasting room, you find big-screen TVs that are properly situated so you won't miss any of the local sporting events, wooden barrels of booze stacked high, and an open brewing area. For the home-brew-curious, Phantom Ales offers a well-stocked store and a six-month program during which you'll learn how a brewery operates from front of house to the back tanks for $1,000 per month.

Behind all the vats of beer is a kitchen, from which trays upon trays of food come out: piled-high nachos, five different kinds of fries, tacos, wings, pizza, sliders and salads. All perfectly pair with the various styles of beer on the menu.

Phantom Ales was originally a winery but in 2014, owner Rob Gundling decided to add a brewery license to allow him to also make beer, cider and mead. The most popular mead here is the Cranberry Pomegranate (13 percent ABV), of which Gundling is hoping to increase production this year to keep up with the growing demand. The Flying Brick (8.2 percent ABV) is a solid IPA that is just as refreshing as it is bitter and finishes clean. At 11 percent ABV, the PXI Belgian Quad is infused with oak and bourbon, which give off strong tannins for a full-bodied, malty finish. The Wisdom Imperial Stout (12 percent ABV) comes fully loaded with notes of chocolate, coffee and toasted malts. And the Apple Cider (6.5 percent ABV) is dry-hopped with Columbus and Centennial hops to create a drink that's tart enough to contrast with the sweetness of the apple, but with a crisp bitterness on the back end.

With a friendly staff and great-tasting suds and grub, Phantom Ales is everything a brewery should be. And who knows? You might catch the home-brew bug!

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

COURTESY OF DOUGH & ARROW

Beyond Valentine's

Three spots where you can keep the love going

BY ANNE MARIE PANORINGAN

Somewhere between the cost of flowers, scoring prix-fixe reservations and standing in line at Victoria's Secret, we realized Feb. 14 was not made for those trying to spend less. Or is it? Our list of alternative couples (and maybe a few singles) options might not be what you'd expect.

TRUE FOOD KITCHEN

There shouldn't be just one day to show your love how much you care—True Food Kitchen shares the love through Feb. 18. Take your mate for a sip at the bar, which offers Valentine's-themed drinks, suggested wines and a mocktail. We're leaning toward the War of the Roses cocktail, with pomegranate-infused vodka and prosecco. *451 Newport Center Dr., Newport Beach, (949) 644-2400, www.truefoodkitchen.com.*

DOUGH & ARROW

Feeling artsy? Head to Dough & Arrow for its very special "Cute Couples" exhibit of dynamic duos. As well as offering prints for sale from many of the artists featured, including Jerrod Maruyama, the coffee and cookie shop has launched a new cookie—talk about tasty delights! The fun lasts through the end of February. *3033 Bristol St., Ste. Q, Costa Mesa, (657) 247-4483, www.doughandarrow.co*

GOLDEN ROAD

The recently opened pub keeps it low-key cool. "No reservations. No fuss. Cool people. Specialty brew. Not awkward." You know how groove is in the heart? Here, love is in the beer. We'll drink to that—and have more of chef Henry Tran's menu, too. *2210 E. Orangewood Ave., Anaheim, (714) 912-4015, www.goldenroad.la.*

Hi-Time Wine Cellars
What's going on at Orange County's best wine bar?
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Our German intern Lara leaves soon, so we thought it fitting to have one more Riesling tasting before she goes! All dry and mostly from Germany and Austria. $20, 4:30-8:30pm
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From classic profiles to 'full throttle' flavors. $25, 4:30-8:30pm
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FRENCH-MEXICAN FUSION
CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

Intercontinental Delight

French burrito at Pandor Artisan Boulangerie & Café

Pandor Artisan Boulangerie & Café combines the elegance of a French bistro with the casual comfort of a neighborhood eatery to dish out everything from fresh breads to Viennoiseries, from sandwiches to crepes, and from salads to savory breakfast bites. Unlike most brunch stops in Old Towne Orange, finding a seat at Pandor is easy. Everything on the menu is good here, but the dish that stands out the most is the French burrito.

Fluffy scrambled eggs, diced potatoes, crumbled spanish chorizo, tomato, onions and Swiss cheese are wrapped in a blanket-sized crepe, then drizzled with spicy harissa. The egg, cheese, potato and meat meld together for a behemoth French burrito that's delicious and savory.

PANDOR ARTISAN BOULANGERIE & CAFÉ
106 N Glassell St., Orange, (714) 912-4007, pandorbakery.com

EAT THIS NOW

» CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

DRINK OF THE WEEK

» CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

Cucumber Concoction at Restauration

Be ready to add Restauration to your happy hour rotation as executive chef Phil Pretty serves up a menu of shareable plates that match his dinner offerings of sustainable modern fare. His burger alone is reason to trek to Long Beach, but with affordable happy-hour prices on delightful cocktails, craft beer and wine, there's no reason to leave the refreshing outdoor patio. We recommend you start with the Cucumber Concoction.

THE DRINK

A heady mixture of citrus, mint and lemonade is enhanced with Los Cabos smooth agave wine (think wine margarita) and enough cucumber to give it a crisp, clean finish. It's a wonderfully addicting cocktail that leaves you lip-puckering for more. Day drinking starts at 3 p.m., and the patio fills up quickly, so get there early to claim your spot!

CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

RESTAURATION
2708 E. Fourth St., Long Beach, (562) 439-8822, restaurationlb.com

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Royal Rumble

Marvel's *Black Panther* is a blockbuster fit for a king

BY AIMEE MURILLO

HAIL TO THE KING

MARVEL STUDIOS

The amount of hype surrounding the release of the latest Marvel superhero film has reached levels not seen for blockbuster films in years. So I won't bury the lede here: *Black Panther* is definitely worth all the praise it has received so far—and then some.

Much of what makes the film a success can be attributed to a number of factors, including co-writer and director Ryan Coogler, who previously directed *Fruitvale Station* and *Creed*. His modus operandi in storytelling has always been to present narratives of the urban black experience with rich, complex characters, so Coogler brings plenty of relevant, timely social justice to this modern blockbuster film. Add to that a stupendous collective of predominantly black talent (Chadwick Boseman, Lupita Nyong'o, Daniel Kaluuya, Michael B. Jordan, Forest Whitaker, Letitia Wright, Danai Gurira and Angela Bassett), wondrous futuristic scenery to build the fictional country of Wakanda, Black Panther's hidden African nation, supercharged fight sequences, enough high-tech gadgetry to make James Bond jealous, and some good ol' humor and warmth, and *Black Panther* feels every bit an elevation of the superhero-film genre and much-needed for these times.

While *Black Panther* isn't the first black superhero film to emerge, the character is the first black American comic-book hero, developed by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby during the intense period of Civil Rights activism in 1966. As an origin story, the film stays faithful to its source material: T'Challa (Boseman) was born to the wealthy ruler of Wakanda, a mythical African nation living off a vast supply of Vibranium, a powerful metal, and high-end alien technology. The young man is set to inherit the throne, as well as the panther suit, after his father is assassinated at a bombing at the Vienna International Centre, as previously depicted in *Captain America: Civil War*.

After his induction ceremony, where he receives the blessing of rival Wakandan tribes (save for one, the Jabari mountain tribe, whose leader, M'Baku, played by Winston Duke, challenges T'Challa to a duel), the responsibility of the crown weighs heavy on T'Challa as he contemplates the film's central moral dilemma: continue the Wakandan tradition of ignoring the plight of the rest of the world to protect its resources and safety, or help refugees and other nations in need by sharing its advancements and comforts. T'Challa is torn, but he hears out the opinions of Nakia (Nyong'o), an undercover spy for Wakanda and T'Challa's ex-girlfriend, and W'Kabi (Kaluuya), T'Challa's ally and head of the Border Tribe.

Meanwhile, at a British historical museum, a precious Wakandan relic is stolen from its display by a former black-ops soldier named Erik Killmonger (Jordan). The relic is passed by Erik to a South African arms dealer and gangster, Ulysses Klaue (Andy Serkis), who plans to auction off the piece to a bidder in South Korea. After a raucous fight sequence in a Busan speakeasy and car chase through South Korea, Erik, as we learn, has more villainy in mind: to pillage the Wakandan supply of Vibranium to arm black people around the world to unleash an all-out race war.

Playing against type, Jordan shows his versatility as the maniacal Erik, whose bloodlust and quest for vengeance has been informed largely by heartache, trauma and a lifetime of racial injustice (and, as we learn later, a heavy familial betrayal). Boseman's T'Challa has a sense of regality and forthrightness, although his one-on-one fight scenes at times feel a tad overly choreographed.

But *Black Panther* wouldn't be as radical or groundbreaking if it weren't for its excellent treatment of female characters. Nyong'o, whom I've longed to see in stronger, mainstream roles, provides as much if not more cunning, toughness and strength as her T'Challa/Black Panther counterpart, and Nakia's love for humanity and Wakanda give the film an extra layer of depth. Wright, who plays T'Challa's teenage sister, Shuri, downplays her high intelligence at first to fulfill her role as the comic relief, until we see her as the engineer behind much of T'Challa's gadgetry and costumes—although Wright has still the deftness to steal any scene with a simple quip.

And then there's General Okoye, fearless warrior and main bodyguard for T'Challa. Played by *The Walking Dead*'s Gurira, Okoye is a skillful fighter and intrepid leader of the Dora Milaje, the Wakandan king's private army of women soldiers. To see Okoye, Nakia, Shuri and the Dora Milaje throw themselves valiantly into battle against any manner of weapons feels like a powerful affirmation of gender equality that has been missing in most mainstream films.

While it shouldn't have taken this long for a Black Panther film to happen, it feels worth the wait to have this team of Coogler, Jordan, Nyong'o, Boseman and others working with the best cinematic technology the 21st century has yet developed. So now that the bar has been raised, Marvel needs to keep the momentum going, with future comic-book characters of color to come, long may they reign.

AMURILLO@OCWEEKLY.COM

BLACK PANTHER

was directed by Ryan Coogler, written by Coogler and Joe Robert Cole, and stars Chadwick Boseman, Michael B. Jordan and Lupita Nyong'o

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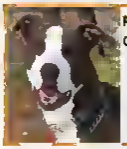

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Scar Tissue

Chance Theater's *Violet* exposes America's cultural fault lines via a mid-1960s road trip

BY JOEL BEERS

An actor playing a character saddled with a physical impairment is no easy feat, Daniel Day-Lewis he damned. For every one that transforms the limitation into a second skin, there are many who use it like a prop. Rather than incorporating it into the character, it *becomes* the character, rendering the performance more gimmicky than genuine.

The lead character in the musical *Violet* isn't impaired, but she is disfigured, a hideous scar etched across her face, the result of a terrible childhood accident. Other characters blanch or shy away from her when they see her, and she has lived half her life staring into a mirror reflecting the revulsion of the faces around her.

Yet, the audience never sees the scar. It is constantly alluded to, and the young woman's desire to be healed by a Bible-thumping televangelist sets the play in motion. But no makeup or costuming attempts to depict the scar; instead, it is up to the actress to somehow capture the physical and psychological toll. Fortunately, in this Chance Theater production of Brian Crawley and Jeanine Tesori's 1997 Tony Award-nominated production, director Kari Hayter has found an actress capable of doing that. Monika Peña's character name is Violet, but she is anything but a shrinking one. She is sassy, determined and headstrong, and rather than acting defensively or ashamed, she has turned years of jeers and shocked stares into a weapon of sorts. Yes, the scar is hideous, inescapable, and she wants nothing more than for it to be gone, but it's there, and if you don't like it, it's more your problem than hers.

That makes for a powerful and moving performance, but it also points out a big flaw in this show: It's too easy. Peña is not only a talented actress, but she is also—SEXISM ALERT!—a very pretty one, and that makes her literal and metaphorical journey in this play (kind of an ugly duckling not turning into a beautiful swan as much as accepting it) seem almost perfunctory. Of course, things are ultimately going to turn out okay for her. Pretty girls may dig graves, as Jack Kerouac once wrote, but this world being what it is, generally speaking, there are always other people around to dig those graves for them. While the audience is invested in Violet's story thanks to the strength of Peña's performance, it's an investment that seems so much of a sure thing that little risk is involved.

Violet is a road-trip story set in 1964, complete with a Greyhound bus, roadside diners, seedy boarding houses, and two

DOUG CATTLER, TRUE IMAGE STUDIO

of the largest narratives of that decade constantly percolating and occasionally bubbling over: race and Vietnam. Violet (played as an adult by Peña and as a child by the very capable Rebeka Hobbk) has exhausted every medical and cosmetic option in terms of her scar. But she still needs to believe, and she finds that hope in the televised sermons of a self-professed healing man of God (a wonderfully manic Chris Kerrigan). She decides to catch a bus from the small town and small-minded folk of Spruce Pine, North Carolina, and travel to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she will meet Preacher and his healing hands.

Of course, other people find her pilgrimage (the story is based on Doris Betts' short story *The Ugliest Pilgrim*) strange, if not laughable—most notably, two U.S. Army servicemen, Monty and Flick, who are on their way to Memphis, then to wherever duty calls. Monty (Jordan Schneider) is the strapping young warrior, dreaming of serving his flag in a foreign land he probably can't even find on a map (it's not even a real war, as he says at one point), Flick (Taylor Fagins) is an African-American who, while not disfigured, wears his own scar: the color of his skin (remember, this is the American South). The three strike up a bond, and with young people being young people, there's drinking, dancing and boot-knocking.

The ensemble is graced with fine voices, the four-person live band plays the gospel/Americana roots-inflected score with gusto, and Hayter crisply moves the one-hour-and-45-minute show. But things never fully come together, a fault less of this production than the story. Many of the songs neither reveal character nor add to the story, the numerous flashbacks feel undercooked, and the shifting triangle between the three main characters seems too matter-of-fact. Again, while this is a story about the desperate quest of a young woman to feel "normal" again, there is very little in this play that seems abnormal (besides the riotously funny scenes during rehearsals for the televised sermon). So while the play talks a lot about heart and courage and conviction, that heart rarely gets the pulse beating. Things just feel too nice most of the time. And it seems like the concerns of *Violet* should make it more than that.

VIOLET

at the Chance Theater, 5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, (888) 455-4212; www.chancetheater.com. Thurs., 7:30 p.m., Fri., 8 p.m., Sat., 3 & 8 p.m., Sun., 3 p.m. Through March 4. $31-$45

TrendZilla

» AIMEE MURILLO

High-Fashion Goth

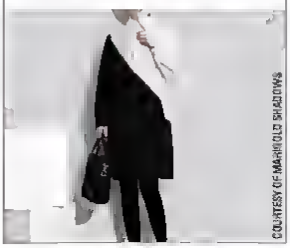
While most local boutiques lean more toward skin-revealing garments and beach-friendly casual-wear, one brand is bringing designer-inspired couture to your closet. Marigold Shadows' refreshing array of individualist avant-garde clothing is a departure from on-trend retailers with its oversize fit, dark color palette and asymmetrical silhouettes. In fact, most of its inventory looks as if it could fit in an Alexander Wang or Jil Sander runway show, thanks to the brand's propensity to engineer what its owner calls "wearable art."

"I'd say our styles are an everyday avant-garde," Zoe Abel says. "For the most part, they're functional—you can walk down the street in them—but they're pretty unique." Looking through the store's online catalog, there's a cohesiveness behind the collection whether a garment is as minimalist as a long sweater dress or as constructed as a ruffled-sleeve blouse. Add to that the clothing's gradient of dark colors and wide, flowy tailoring, and Marigold Shadows delivers an element of sophistication to 21st century street-wear. No basic tees or body-con dresses a la Nasty Gal wanted.

Abel and her team of designers usually make about 10 pieces of each style to test market. Inspired by Japanese and Korean street styles, as well as *Dia de los Muertos* (the store's name references the marigolds displayed at altars during the holiday), Marigold Shadows caters to people looking for statement apparel and would probably fit in equally with the New York Fashion Week set, Goths and other artsy millennial types. Plus, the brand's use of faux leather makes it a hit with vegans.

With a brand-new warehouse, Marigold Shadows primarily operates online-only, with the occasional pop-up at the Lab in Costa Mesa and Marcas Gallery in downtown Santa Ana. But Abel says she'd ideally like to open a brick-and-mortar in OTSA, with Instagram-worthy interactive experiences. In the meantime, find your supply of threads at marigoldshadows.com.

AMURILLO@OCWEEKLY.COM



COURTESY OF MARIGOLD SHADOWS

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So Long, Sandy

The Back Alley owner was Fullerton's Man Behind the Music

BY JOEL BEERS

DAMION LLOYD

Sandy Kates was many things to many people: father, father figure, grandfather, mentor and confidant, pot-smoking pal, beer-drinking buddy, bar's poker adversary, friend. He loved professional tennis and Las Vegas, despised Donald Trump and FOX News; and was honest, compassionate and generous. Of course, all the truly interesting people contain multitudes. He could also be impatient, prickly and, when the situation warranted it—and sometimes even if it didn't—possessed of a temper as furious as a pissed-off Zeus hurling devastating thunderbolts from atop Mount Olympus.

Sandy's Mount Olympus was admittedly smaller: the Back Alley Bar & Grill, which he opened in 1999 in downtown Fullerton. At the time, downtown Fullerton was a much milder beast. You could get a drink at about 10 places in the general vicinity and maybe catch some blues, jazz or other live entertainment at a few of them, but if you wanted to hear live, local music on a nightly basis, Back Alley was the only place to go downtown. And that was true for several years.

Nearly every other night for a solid 15 years or so, that's what Back Alley offered. A local's bar by day, dominated by Sandy holding court on a stool at the end of the outside bar; at night, it served as a haven for local bands. Name the genre, and it passed through its confines: blues and country, jazz and reggae, punk and rock, lounge singers and tribute bands, cover bands and original acts.

Sandy, who passed away at age 70 from cancer-related complications Jan. 27, wasn't a musician himself, though, like most guys growing up in Baltimore and New Jersey in the 1960s, he could strum a guitar and carry a tune. But his vision for his bar—which was his third career, after selling rugs and as a licensed marriage and family therapist—was a family-owned, unpretentious place where just about anybody, as well as any kind of band, was welcome.

"There was no bullshit red tape to go through, submitting demos, bios, photos," says Tom Schmitt, whose bands Longfellow and Sederra, plus numerous side projects, played Back Alley dozens of times. "Sandy just wanted live music, and that was most important."

At the time of the bar's opening, Schmitt said, Longfellow were drawing 1,000-plus kids at shows at Chain Reaction and the Glass House, neither of which sold alcohol. "But there were no decent 21-and-over venues in North OC," he recalls. "Back Alley changed that. It allowed us to play shows to a different audience, and for our friends, and there was actually less pressure to perform, although that never stopped me. After Longfellow, every performing project I was in played there. Any time I wanted to play a show, I'd call Sandy, and it'd be done. Didn't matter if I was tearing strips of paper while I beat-boxed. Didn't matter to Sandy."

Several bands over the years played weekly or monthly gigs, but no ensemble played as regularly or often as the '70s-themed Jungle Boogie and '80s-themed 80s Is Enough. Both bands dressed in outlandish costumes and featured the same core musicians, augmented by seasoned professional performers who have played with the likes of Scott Weiland, Jeffrey Osborne, Bow Wow Wow and Chuck Negron of Three Dog Night.

Frank Reina, the principal drummer for both outfits, met Sandy in 1987 at an Irvine club Reina was playing. They struck up a friendship, and Reina soon realized that Sandy could be more than a fan. "I found out he was a therapist, and I was going through some shit with my [former] wife," Reina says. "So I asked if he could help me [on a professional basis]. He ran his practice out of his house, and we got together a couple of times, but we ended up just smoking pot and playing tennis. That was our therapy session. And, looking back, it's exactly the therapy I needed."

Back Alley's sound was never pristine. The combination of brick walls, wood floors and high ceilings always made amps, particularly guitar amps, sound unduly harsh. But that didn't stop bands from wanting to play there. There was no pay-to-play bullshit, and most nights, bands received 10 percent of the bar sales.

"Before the Back Alley, occasionally somebody would start booking shows at random places like Pete and Tony's and Mikki's, but no venue was willing to commit to the live, original music thing, except for Steamer's which did a great job focusing on the jazz scene," says Dave Dutton, whose bands Trip the Spring, Bods, and Joho Kraus and the Goers have frequently played Back Alley. "But there was still no absolute place where you could be guaranteed to see a live band. And that's where Sandy filled in.

"He agreed to let [Trip the Spring] perform before he heard us," Dutton continues. "And we could perform all night long, where at most other venues, a gig would be filled with five to seven bands, and you only got 20 minutes to play. We got to stretch our wings out, improvise and do what we do best. There was no other place like it."

Ironically, the Back Alley's open-door policy to any and all bands may have signaled the demise of its offering mostly live music. Some nights, bands seemed to drive away crowds rather than attract them. And once the Slidebar (whose founders, the members of Lit, also played Back Alley back in the day) positioned itself as the premier live-music venue downtown, along with increasing competition from a plethora of new bars, most of which focused primarily on DJs, Back Alley began doing the same.

But local bands still play there from time to time, including a resident biweekly gig on Sundays by the Darden Sisters, a phenomenally talented group of sisters whom Sandy loved.

All the bands, no matter how polished (or, frankly, how sucky) they were, left a mark—and not just the obligatory stickers that festooned nearly every empty surface of the bar. And through their leaving their mark, Sandy also left his.

"Sandy gave people opportunities," says John Harrington, a trumpeter whose former band, Delta Nove (think P-Funk meets Miles Davis), played numerous full-capacity shows that often bled out to the Back Alley's outside patio. "If all our past experiences help shape who we are today ... then Sandy and the bar shaped a lot of people."

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Opening OC's eyes to Sleep State's awkward success

BY JOSH CHESLER

If it weren't for Sleep State guitarist/vocalist Troy Ritchie's social ineptitude in his earlier years, the indie pop trio may never have come together—and their new single definitely wouldn't be the same. "'Awkward' is a really fun and upbeat song about my experience in high school with social anxiety and how I got over being the socially anxious person that I was," Ritchie says. "I used to make a really big deal out of things that weren't that bad, and I've learned to let a lot of it go. This has always been a song that's close to my heart, and it's also a reminder of what I used to be and how far I've come."

Sleep State have slowly evolved from being a few OC dudes playing the music they wanted to hear into one of the internet's favorite local bands. Between the streaming success of one of the band's first singles, 2015's "Tether," and features on TV shows including MTV's *Teen Mom 2* and ABC's *Nashville*, the band have found themselves growing at a rapid pace despite having barely half an hour's worth of original content to perform at their live shows.

"We've been lucky to be placed so well on TV because we weren't sure what was going to happen with that, so we just took it as it came," Ritchie says. "Even though some of the stuff was a little hard to hear in the background, it's been really cool to see. The streaming success also really surprised us because we weren't sure how 'Tether' was going to face off on Spotify to lead the pack, and the rest of the songs have been really strong behind it."

Part of the group's success is thanks to the diversity of their songs. While "Tether" is a bit on the softer side (so much so that it was on Starbucks' playlist for a while), tracks such as "Make a Move" and "Awkward" carry a faster pace and varied lyrical content. As keyboardist—and Ritchie's high-school buddy—Michael Haua confirms, their primary lyricist likes to dabble in a variety of genres both as a fan and as an artist.

"I'm a very eclectic person, so I like to listen to everything and steal ideas from everybody," Ritchie says with a laugh. "I just kind of tinker a lot with synthesizer sounds on my computer and figure out what sounds good. A lot of times, I'll start a song with a lyric or a melody or a chord progression that I like and just let it go from there. I never try to force a sound. I just write the song, and then come up with different parts that fit."

After dropping their first track of 2018 and a recent show at the Wayfarer, Ritchie, Haua and drummer Parker Jackson—who joined the duo after seeing a performance—ace planning their next big moves, as well as making sure fans have a steady stream of new tunes coming their way.

"We have another single coming out soon, and then we're going to try to push out as much new material as possible," Ritchie says. "Hopefully, we'll do some music videos, we'll book some shows around Los Angeles and Orange County, and we'll just get as much out as we possibly can. We're hoping this is a good year for us."

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CHUCK RAGAN 8 p.m., free, 21+. Slidebar Rock-n-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469. www.slidebarfullerton.com

GRATEFUL SHRED 8 p.m. $15 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa. (949) 764-0033. www.wayfarercm.com.

PLAYBOY CARTI 11 p.m. $30 (sold out), all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com.

SATURDAY

THE DAN BAND 8 p.m. $30, all ages. Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano. (949) 488-8330. thecoachhouse.com

BLITZEN TRAPPER 8 p.m., $17-$20, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0033. www.wayfarercm.com

GAMEFACE, ODD ROBOT, ERROR TYPE 11, ROONEY SELLARS 8:30 p.m. $10, 21+. Slidebar Rock n Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469, www.slidebarfullerton.com

MICKEY AVALON 7 p.m. $5-$80, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com.

POWER SERGE 7 p.m., $15, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583. www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

THROW RAG, THE CREEPY CREEPS, THE GRARRERS, THE ZERO CLASS 8 p.m., $15, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. (562) 434-8292. www.alexsbar.com

SUNDAY

ALTERBEAST, GRINDMOTHER, THE KENHEDY VEIL 8 p.m., $12.61, all ages. Melanie's, 604 F. Dyer Rd., Santa Ana. www.facebook.com/MelaniesConcertVenue

EXTENDED BRUNCH WITH THE SLIMETONES 1 p.m., free, 21+. Gallaghar's Pub & Grill, 300 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach. (714) 536-2422. www.facebook.com/GallaghersPubHB

G PERICO 8 p.m. $15, all ages. The Constellation Room, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com

JAIL WEDDINGS, THE ARIGAILS, FRONTIER CLUB 8 p.m. $8, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. (562) 434-8292. www.alexsbar.com.

KATE VOEGELE & TYLER HILTON 7 p.m. $20, all ages. Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano. (949) 496-8930. thecoachhouse.com

MONDAY

RA RA TONKA 8 p.m., free, 21+. Slidebar Rock-n-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469. www.slidebarfullerton.com

LAHITARIANS, MOM AND THE MAILMAN, BLOOM 8 p.m., free, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0033. www.wayfarercm.com

XAVIER WULF 7:30 & 10:30 p.m. $20, all ages. The Constellation Room, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com

TUESDAY

POPPY 8 p.m. $28, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com

WEDNESDAY

DARRSTAR ORCHESTRA 7 p.m. $25, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583. www.houseofblues.com/anaheim

MALIA CIVETZ, KALIRA & KIANA, IN THE WILDERNESS 8 p.m., free, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0033. www.wayfarercm.com

SHOVELS & ROPE 8 p.m. $27, all ages. Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano. (949) 496-8930. thecoachhouse.com

TY DOLLA $IGN 8 p.m. $28.50, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com.

THURSDAY, FEB. 22

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE 8 p.m., $25, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583. www.houseofblues.com/anaheim

NOAH GUNDERSON, AARON GILLESPIE 8 p.m., $20-$23, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0033. www.wayfarercm.com

PHILIEANO, LAW, TIGER SEX, PERRO BRAVO, THE ZIGGEHS 8:30 p.m., 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292. www.alexsbar.com

T-PAIN 8 p.m. $28, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600. www.ohservatoryoc.com

Fighting Words

I'm a 24-year old nonbinary person living in Florida. I have two wonderful girlfriends. One I have been with for four years (we live together); the other I have been with for a year and a half. They're both brilliant, interesting and kind. Both relationships have their issues, but they are minor. They know each other but aren't close. Neither is interested in people besides me right now, although my longer-term girlfriend identifies as poly. They have both said they see a future with me, but something doesn't feel right. I've been having fantasies about leaving them both. It's not about wanting to find someone I like better—if I met someone I really liked, I could pursue it. I just feel like neither relationship can progress while both exist. My other friends are getting married. I don't think I want to stay in this setup indefinitely. Even if my girlfriends liked each other, which they don't, I don't want sister wives or two families. But I also can't imagine choosing between them. I feel like a scumbag for even thinking about it. I've talked to them, and they are both having reservations about the current situation. Neither of them want some kind of three-person family structure, either. The only thing I can think to do (besides running away) is wait and see if one of these relationships fizzles out on its own. Am my fantasies of escape normal? Is wanting to be with "the one" just straight nonsense?

Engaged Now But Yearning

"The one" is nonsense, ENBY, but it's not straight nonsense—lots of queer people believe that "the one," their perfect match, is out there somewhere. But despite the fact that there are no perfect matches, people are constantly ending loving relationships that could go the distance to run off in search of "the one" that doesn't exist. As I've pointed out again and again, there are lots of 0.64s out there and if you're lucky you might find a 0.73 lurking in the pile. When you find a serviceable 0.64 or (God willing) a spectacular 0.73, it's your job to round that motherfucker up to "the one." (And don't forget they're doing the same for you—just as there's no "the one" for you, you're no one's "the one." Everyone is rounding up.)

Zooming in on your question, ENBY, you say what you have now—two girlfriends who can't stand each other—is working. Are you sure about that? While fantasies of escape are normal—we all spend time thinking about the road we didn't take, the door we didn't try, the ass we didn't eat—it's odd to hear someone with two girlfriends wish for one or both to disappear. Perhaps it's not *who* you're doing that's the problem, ENBY, but *what* you're doing. The kind of polyamory you're practicing—concurrent and equal romantic partnerships—may not be right for you. I'm not trying to YDIW you here ("You're doing it wrong!"), but if you're envious of your friends who are settling down with just one partner, perhaps you'd be more comfortable in an open-not-poly relationship (sex with others okay, romance with others not okay) or a hierarchical poly relationship (your primary partner comes first, your secondary partner(s) come[s] second).

Finally, ENBY, it could be the stress of having two partners who don't like each other that has you fantasizing about escape and/or one of your partners evaporating. Each of your girlfriends might make sense independently of each other, but if having to share you doesn't work for them ... it's never going to work for you.

I'm 27 years old, and I've been married to my partner for two years. I'm facing a conundrum. A relative sexually abused me when I was younger. It happened a handful of times, and I've never told anyone other than my partner. I'm now struggling to decide not whether I should tell my parents

SavageLove

» DAN SAVAGE

(I should), but when. The abuse fucked me up in some ways, but I have been working through it with a therapist. The problem is my siblings and cousins have started having their own children, and seeing the relative—a member of my extended family—with their kids is dredging up a lot of uncomfortable memories. I see this relative frequently, as we all live in the area and get together as a family at least once a month. I don't have children of my own yet, but my partner and I have already decided that this relative will never touch or hold the ones we do have. So do I tell my parents now? My extended family is tightly knit, and I fear the issues that sharing this secret will inevitably create. Am I starting unnecessary drama since I'm not even pregnant yet?

My Family Kinda Sucks

Your kids may not yet exist, MFKS, but your young nieces, nephews and cousins do—and your abuser has access to them. So the drama you fear creating isn't unnecessary—it's incredibly *necessary*. And since you were planning to tell your parents eventually, the drama is *inevitable*. But let's say you wait to tell your parents until you have children of your own—how will you feel if you learn, after the curtain goes up on this drama, that this relative had sexually abused another child in your family (or multiple children in your family or children outside your family) in the weeks, months or years between your decision to tell your parents and the moment you told them?

My partner does phone sex work. A lot of the calls are from "straight" guys who ask to be "forced" to suck cock. (We assume the forced part is because they think there's something wrong with being gay.) We're wondering if there's a sex-positive word we should be using to describe these guys. If not, your readers should coin one, so all un-straight dudes who love dick can take pride in sex desires. Fill in the blank: "_____-a 100 percent straight guy who also loves sucking dick (and perhaps taking it in the ass)."

Cucksuckers Need Nouns

The kink you describe already has a name—forced bi—and a forced bi scene usually goes something like this. A guy who would never, ever suck a cock because he's *totally* straight gets down on his knees and sucks cocks on the orders of his female dominant. Since this *totally* straight guy sucks cock only to please a woman, there's nothing gay and/or bi about all the cocks he puts in his mouth. It's one very particular way in which male bisexuality is expressed—think of it as male bisexual desire after hetero fragility, gay panic, denial, religion, gender norms and football get through kicking the shit out of it. Paradoxically, CNN, by the time a guy asks a woman to force him to suck a cock, has allowing himself to suck a cock and therefore no longer in denial. (And, yes, guys into forced bi are free to identify as straight—indeed, they have to keep identifying as straight, since identifying as bi would fatally undermine the transgression that makes their perfectly legitimate kink arousing.)

But what to call these guys?

Well, CNN, some people into BDSM call themselves "BDSMers." But "forcedbi-ers" doesn't trip quite so easily off the tongue—so maybe we go with "cocksuckers"? It's an emasculating slur one that straight-identified men throw around to get, um, a rise out of each other (Call an out-and-over-it gay man a cocksucker and all you'll get in return is a "No shit."). But while "You're a cocksucker" may be fighting words for a straight guy, they're highly arousing ones for a straight-identified guy into forced bi.

On the Lovecast *(savagelovecast.com), a scientific study on gay cuckolding. Contact Dan via email at mail@savagelove.net, follow him on Twitter @fakedansavage, and visit ITMFA.org.*

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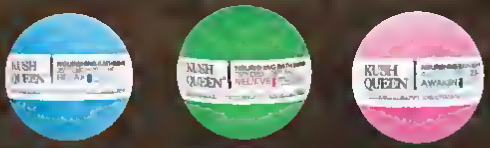

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Toke of the Week

» ROBERT FLORES

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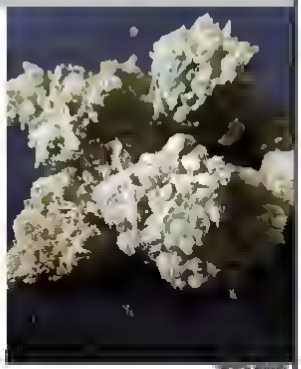

ROBERT FLORES

I've been a customer at various dispensaries in Santa Ana since 2012, when the city was constantly shutting them down, spending at least $1 million of taxpayer money to keep cancer patients such as myself from getting the medicine we needed to help us with the nausea and pain of chemo. Then it got smart and became partners with the dispensaries, making it legal to buy medical marijuana in Santa Ana. IF you went to sanctioned dispensaries, which were clean, organized, beautiful, safe havens for anyone with a doctor's recommendation.

Curious what 2018's legalization brought to the scene, I ventured to Anaheim. The Bakery has the same Apple Store–like ambiance as MedMenOC. The budtenders are super nice and friendly, and there's a nice selection of flower, concentrates and edibles. First-time customers get a 5-gram 1/8, and I chose Purple Tart, which has a lighter color and a very citrusy aroma.

It's very dense, somewhat sticky, but not icky. It smoked very smoothly. After one bowl, I didn't feel much of anything. A few more bowls later, and I started to feel pretty relaxed, but not "glued" to the couch. Then I smoked a few more bowls, and BOOM! I'm passed out! I've had creepers before, but Purple Tart really surprised me—well-played.

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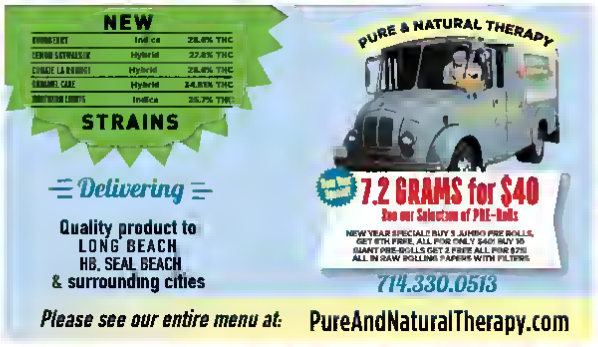
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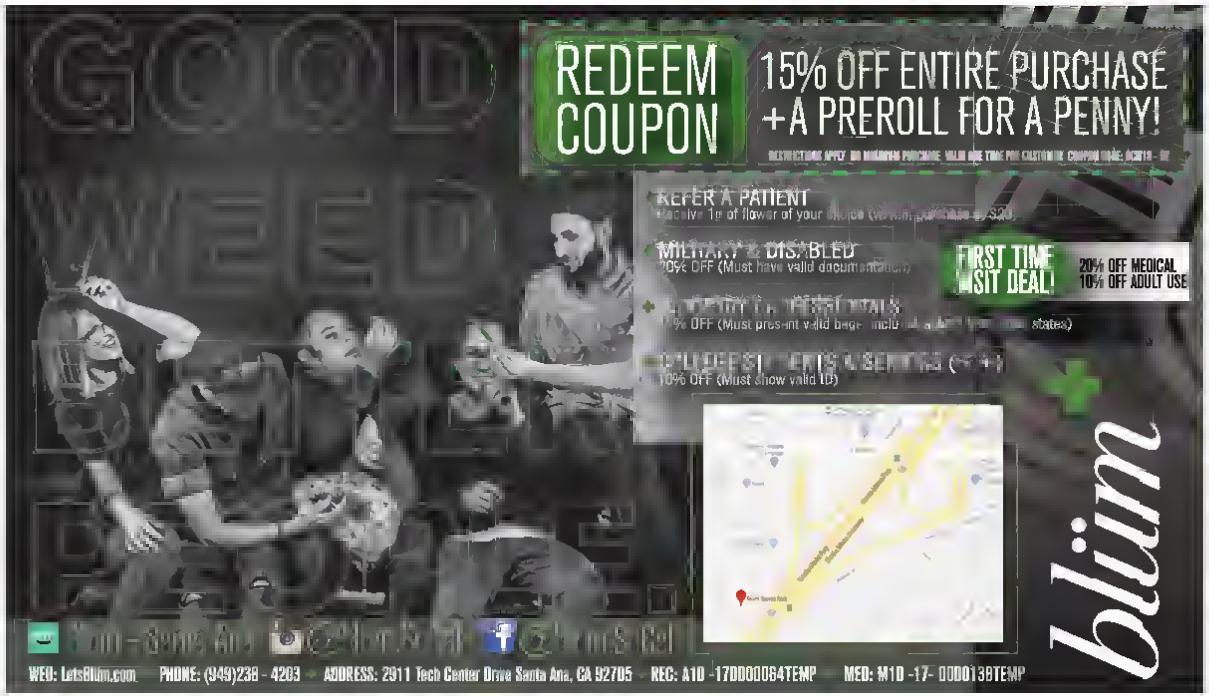
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Accounting Manager- prepare tax returns and financial statements. Inspect account books and systems for efficiency. Bachelor's degree in Finance, Accounting or related field. Reqd Resume to Kemel University 3515 W Lincoln Ave #201 Anaheim, CA 92801

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Pacific Life Insurance Co has the following job openings: Systems Admin Consultant-Desktop Automation in Aliso Viejo, CA (req #15561); Sr Application Developer 1 in Aliso Viejo, CA (req #5859) and Sr Systems Analyst in Newport Beach, CA (req #15703). Send resume to: employment@pacificlife.com referencing req # EOE

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Employment

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Champagne, chilaquiles and drag queens—oh, my!

BY MARY C CARREON

WEDNESDAY AJA

Orange County is the **Stepford**-wife, soccer-mom, cookie-cutter-housing-tract capital of Southern California. It's a place that projects images of affluence accented by pristinely manicured lawns behind white picket fences. But the world that exists below the surface is a hell of a lot more colorful than that plastic projection. You can take a dip into this funky realm every weekend at the **VLVT Lounge** in Santa Ana.

On the morning I visited the **Drag Brunch**, two sets of brides and their maidens sat at long tables placed at opposite ends of the stage. A waiter generously poured champagne into everyone's vintage coupe glass. Bubbles foam over the top after every pour, eliciting yelps of excitement from the women.

"When Doves Cry" off **Prince**'s ***Purple Rain*** slowly fades out, as a voice calls out over the loudspeaker, "Happy motherfucking Saturday, bitttttchessss!" A 6-foot-4-inch-tall woman with reddish-brown, shoulder-length hair, broad shoulders and impressively sleek legs gracefully waltzes onto the stage. "Oraaaaaaaange Cooouuunnttyyyyy—like, oh, my goddd, all you bitches look so good with your fake boobs," says **Dani Kay**, a witty drag queen who moves more femininely in heels than I do.

"We've been in this shit since 9 a.m.," she informs the crowd, referring to her and her fellow queens' layers of hair, makeup, pantyhose and heels. "Aaaaaand I'm pretty sure we're all way more wasted than you ladies. . . . So you better catch the fuck up."

Glasses of champagne rise in unison, as Dani walks offstage and into the rows of tables. "What's your name, and why are you here?" she asks the first bride-to-be, a short blonde with well-kempt curls.

"My name is **Tiffany**, and I'm getting married."

"Aw, how sweet!" says Dani. "You're signing away your freedom. When's the big day?"

"In March," replies Tiffany as her bridesmaids laugh.

"Awww," says Dani. "How long?"

"It's been about three—"

Tiffany is then interrupted by the sassy hostess. "Yeah, I don't care how long you've been together," says Dani. "I want to know how long his dick is."

Every bridesmaid in the room screamed with laughter. Placing her hands over her mouth, Tiffany turns red from laughing—and, no doubt, the booze.

Dani struts through the room, interacting with people at every table. When she saw me with my notebook open, cackling like a hyena as I took notes, she put the microphone in my face. "Well, what are you doing—taking notes? Have I failed already?"

Announcing into a microphone to a large group of people that you're there reporting on them is akin to asking for pitchforks to be thrown at you—especially under this administration. I feel as if I'm **Peter Parker** being forced to reveal he's **Spider-Man** as I admit my purpose this afternoon.

"All right everyone, put your vaginas away," Dani says. "We have to tone this show down now because of this bitch. Everyone stop having fun now."

After talking to **Angie**, the other bride in the room, Dani introduces the afternoon's first performer. "Please welcome to the stage **Mahaliah Nakita!**"

A tall, dark-skinned queen with the biggest, most majestic hair since **Diana Ross** in the '70s saunters into vision. A spotlight shines on her as **"I Want to Dance With Somebody"** overpowers the loud, intoxicated audience. In a stellar red '80s jumpsuit with a thick, mid-waist belt and black over-the-knee boots, Mahaliah leaps and high-kicks around the room as she lip-synchs to the late **Whitney Houston**'s hit song, remixed into a faster disco-electronic beat. The women at Angie's table are riled up, standing and waving their glasses, sloshing bubbly everywhere.

Trina Models, a **Madonna**-inspired mariachi bullfighter, follows with **"La Isla Bonita."** She cartwheels gracefully across the stage in a glistening corset as though a seasoned cheerleader. "I want to move like her," remarks the woman sitting next to me. *Same*, I think.

The next queen wins my award for the best drag name: **Wilhelmina Caviar**. According to sources, Ms. Caviar performs during the week at **Main Street Bar & Cabaret** in Laguna Beach. Through various drag-show adventures, I've learned queens work their asses off, so doing four shows in a weekend, plus performing during the week takes MAJOR dedication.

Wilhelmina's curvy silhouette appears as if materializing out of thin air. As the electronic music starts, the rainbow disco ball begins to spin, and **Sandra**, the birthday girl in the room, starts to scream and rile up the girls at her table while gyrating like a chinchilla in her seat.

The last performer takes the stage. Dani defines the word *diva* as she dances to **Meghan Trainor**'s **"Me Too,"** the chorus of which is "If I was you, I'd want to be me, too."

During the two-hour show, each queen goes twice. My entire table orders the chilaquiles, which are stellar. I hold chilaquiles to unrealistically high standards, and these are delectable.

Being a woman is inherently difficult—even in 2018. Misogyny still exists, women don't get paid as much as men, and females are still considered the lesser of the two genders. But there's something extraordinary about men who flourish in the power of being a woman. Drag queens dance, lip-synch, strut and do cartwheels that land in a split. If it's possible to swing from a chandelier, they'll do it while flicking their heads around, then elegantly gliding back onto the floor in 6-inch stilettos—all for the sake of entertainment. And their elaborate hair and makeup take HOURS to do. But they make being a woman look fun as hell.

They say a real man wears pink—but in 2018, real men wear drag.

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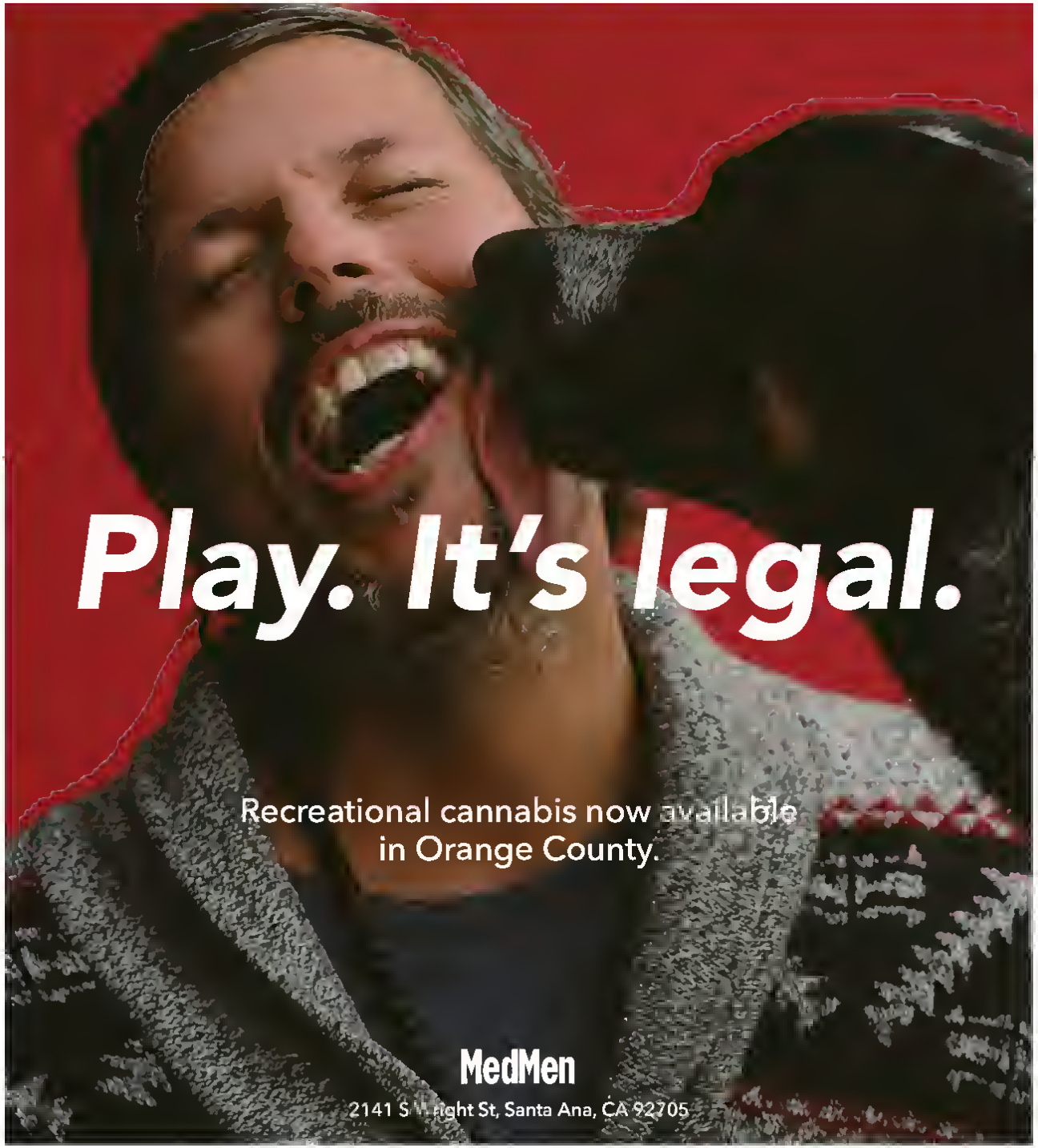
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